

February 15, 2010

## RICHMOND STRIKERS AND RICHMOND KICKERS WEEKEND U16s pick up a draw and win while U18s draw and lose on the road

From Coach Gunn: Having spent the week wondering if and how we would be playing, it was quite exciting for the players to show up at Striker Park to see 120 x 75 yards of green surrounded by 6 feet high snow mounds. The Strikers played very defensively, sitting back, forcing our team to have to take the initiative. From start to finish we kept the better of possession, created more chances, but just couldn't find the final pass or finishing touch. The Strikers were limited to counter attacks, but still carved out a couple of chances against the run of play. Stefan Knapp and Jaron Bradley were forced to make important saves to keep our shutout, while the save of the day had to be credited to the Strikers keeper when he denied a wonderful volley from Zhuvonte Wilson that he tipped onto the cross bar. On the balance of play we could have easily edged the game, but we could still be happy with a solid shutout performance and the 0-0 draw.

Sunday morning saw even bigger snow mounds surrounding the fields and still chilly temperatures. The team started brightly again and after the early exchanges began to get the upper hand. After a few good chances Charlotte got off the mark with a quality finish by Ben Burdon who latched on to a great through pass from Zhuvonte Wilson. Before half-time CSA doubled the lead when Burdon smashed home in a crowded area after Matt Brown had challenged on a corner kick taken by Rowland Minogue. The second half was more of the same with CSA taking control of the game, passing and linking with confidence. Austin Yearwood scored from a well struck free kick curling from distance into the top left hand corner. The 4-0 score line was completed when Matt Van Dyne drove the ball home on a rebound from a Burdon shot with minutes remaining. All in all it was a positive weekend with the team recording two shutouts.

From Coach Butler: On a frigid evening the U18s started brightly, pressing the Strikers high in their half. The pressure caused the Strikers to turn the ball over several times in their half and led to several half chances. Good crossing from both Brett Luccia and Nick Barnhorst were creating half chances. In the 22<sup>nd</sup> minute we got the breakthrough. After some good combination play down the right side Barnhorst served a long looping cross to the back post, Luccia nodded to back across the goal and Jono Grad was there to slot home from ten yards out. We were unfortunate not to score a couple more but went in 1-0 up. After half time we lost our way a little. The Strikers capitalized on a mistake down our right side mid way through the half and scored from 15 yards out. At 1-1 I still felt like we could win the game. Our passing was good and we continued to take the game to the Strikers. After playing 4-5-1 for a period we went back to 4-4-2 in the last 15 minutes and went close on several occasions.

We went into the Richmond Kickers game two men down. Injuries to Kyle Searles and Conner Miller from the previous night took their toll and neither player was able to participate. We came out slowly, probably for the first time this season, and we were second to the ball throughout the first 15 minutes. The pressure took its toll. Despite two world class saves from Trent Johnson we went 1-0 down within 20 minutes when some good combination play down the Kickers right sided resulted in a good cross and then a finish at the back post. We responded well, hit the post, looked dangerous on corners but could not score. The second half was better for us. We took the game to the Kickers but could not score. We went close on several occasions but lacked the final touch. With 15 minutes to go we went to 3-4-3 with Jason Chapman pushed into the front line and Jake Keating pushed up into the midfield from left back. The move worked a charm and with 5 minutes to play a good cross from the left again from Barnhorst eluded the Kicker's goal keeper and Chapman was there at the back post to nod it home and make the score 1-1. It was not to be the end though. With 5 minutes added to regulation time the Kickers scored 4 minutes into injury time with a fine solo effort that saw the boy run 35 yard with the ball, get through our back line and beat Johnson one on one from 7 yards out. The boys showed a lot of character to get back in the game and I know are disappointed that they did not hold on for at least the point.

This weekend both teams travel to Virginia Beach to play the Virginia Rush on Saturday and then onto Northern Virginia where they will face McLean on Sunday.